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21 May 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Meeting with Chairman Rivers and Chief Counsel Blandford of House Armed Services Committee re the Cancellation of OXCART

1. Yesterday I called Mr. Blandford to arrange for Chairman Rivers to be informed on the above matter and to ask Mr. Blandford if he could make a date for us to talk to the Chairman. He suggested that I visit his office at 0715 this morning and we could discuss it and then decide how best to inform the Chairman.

2. I arrived at Mr. Blandford's office at 0715 and we had no sooner exchanged casual remarks about Blandford's recent trip when the Chairman joined us. He opened the conversation by brusquely asking Blandford why he hadn't informed the Chairman regarding the Pueblo matter. Blandford said he himself had not been informed. The Chairman said he had been told by Mr. Helms that Blandford had been informed. Blandford said this was not correct. I explained that it was my understanding that several congressional staff officers primarily concerned had been informed and suggested that Mr. Helms probably assumed that this included Blandford. However, I said that in fact we had no record that Blandford had been informed and fully accepted his statement that he had not been.

3. The Chairman then made a few remarks about the Agency's failure to keep him informed, remarking that henceforth he would expect to be promptly informed of whatever he should know about.

4. Blandford explained that I was there to talk about the cancellation of OXCART. The Chairman commented that he didn't have time to "listen to a lot of stuff" about OXCART, but he wanted to know why it was being suddenly cancelled. I said I understood this was primarily because of budgetary considerations. The Chairman made an uncomplimentary remark about former Defense Secretary McNamara, whom he indicated was responsible for our budgetary difficulties.

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5. The Chairman asked if an OXCART vehicle had ever been shot down. I said no, but that one had been washed out in a training accident.

6. In response to further questions by the Chairman and Blandford, I mentioned the numbers of OXCART missions and the high percent of success; the annual cost of the program, [redacted] 25X1A the fact that by taking account of the savings accomplished by mothballing eight SR 71's [redacted]

I also briefly mentioned the problems involved in mothballing.

7. The Chairman asked if the program was still considered highly classified. I said it was indeed. He said "you mean nobody knows CIA is running this?" I said I hoped not and was unaware of any serious leaks. The Chairman commented that "if the Air Force takes it over everybody will hear about it soon enough," adding that he was much concerned about cancellation of OXCART and was seriously considering "bringing the problem into the open." I repeated that we considered the project very sensitive. The Chairman said he would take "full responsibility" regarding any security problems.

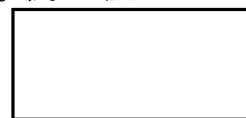
8. The Chairman directed that we prepare a "complete paper" regarding the history and performance of OXCART, and of its termination. He said this paper should be given to Blandford who would keep it in his personal safe where it would be available for reference so that "we won't have to rely on anybody's memory."

9. Comment: The Chairman was clearly in a testy mood this morning, and Committee Counsel Phil Kelleher, with whom I discussed the matter afterwards, suggested an explanation. He recalls trying to focus the Chairman's attention on the problem some time ago without success, and speculates that now the Chairman is mad with himself (and everybody else) to find that the project, which he regarded highly, had been cancelled before he weighed in to save it.

10. In connection with the Chairman's complaint about "not being kept informed", it is worth noting that an officer from DIA [redacted] 25X1A [redacted] apparently calls on the Chairman every morning at 0730 to show him a copy of the DIA daily bulletin and brief him on current developments.

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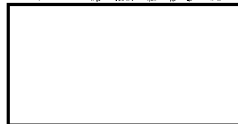
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